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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6780
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RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 7611
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0642
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 2805
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 1931
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 2177
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0225
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0208
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 0238
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0608
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

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SUBJECT: UNHCR PROPOSES JOINT REFUGEE REGISTRATION WITH GOM

Ref: Rabat 00630

1. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

2. (SBU) On May 24, UNHCR Head of Office Johannes Van der Klaauw told poloff that he had submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) seeking to form a joint registration process for refugees and asylum seekers. The process would allow joint recognition of the refugees and asylum seekers by UNHCR and the GOM to insure just treatment of recognized refugees living in Morocco. Van der Klaauw said UNHCR is ready to provide training on the recognition and handling process of refugees and asylum seekers to MOI and MOJ officials and Moroccan security forces.

3. (SBU) While Van der Klaauw went on to say that he does not believe there is widespread abuse of refugees in Morocco he does admit that there are monthly arrests of recognized refugees throughout the country. Oujda, in particular and the frontier with Algeria in general are the areas with the most frequent problem areas. Van der Klaauw says security officials arrest approximately 30 refugee seekers a month in Oujda. They are generally held for 24 to 48 hours and then "turned back" to the border, according to Van der Klaauw. He claims that two or three of those arrested each month are recognized refugees carrying documentation issued by UNHCR in Rabat. Van der Klaauw says the refugees make their way back to Oujda from the frontier and are assisted by local NGOs who contact UNHCR headquarters, who in turn arrange to have the refugees brought back to Rabat for new papers to replace those that are nearly always destroyed by police.

4. (SUB) Van der Klaauw told poloff that police and security forces on the frontier do not recognizing official UN documents. He is aware that local security forces are in a difficult position since many migrants enter Morocco with false refugee documents provided by traffickers in Algeria. Van der Klaauw believes that a joint recognition and registration process could alleviate these problems for refugees in the region. Forming a GOM registry and

supplying the refugees with government identification cards would allow them safe passage in the country as well as access to legal employment and education.

¶15. (SBU) When asked about the status of the agreement of regularization of UNHCR's relations with the GOM, Van der Klaauw groaned that he is reassured weekly by the MOI that the agreement will be signed. He is confident that the agreement is forthcoming but as of the meeting with poloff there was no official word as to when.

¶16. (SBU) Turning to the topic of resettlement, Van der Klaauw updated poloff on the status of the refugees slated to be resettled in the U.S. He stated that he hoped to have at least ten candidates processed by the end of June. Van der Klaauw said that he would have liked to have had more ready by that time but delays in the arrival of temporary support staff held up the processing.

¶17. (SBU) In winding up the conversation Van der Klaauw mentioned that he has seen growing tension in the Congolese refugee community in Rabat, a group that until now has been unified and organized. He said that rumors were circulating that a few of the recognized refugees were dictating to UNHCR who should and should not be recognized, which has resulted in growing resentment in the community. (Note: Poloff also has been contacted by one of the leaders of the community who confided that he feared his life was in danger due to threats from his countrymen who were refused recognition.)

¶18. (SBU) Comment: After signing the agreement of recognition with UNHCR, accepting Van der Klaauw's proposal to form a joint refugee recognition office is a constructive next step for Morocco to take in order to fulfill its international responsibilities. Morocco has made clear its dedication to finding a solution to its migration problem, in part, by planning to host an international migration conference in July. However, in addition to finding a solution to its main concern of sub-Saharanans transiting the country on their way to Europe, Morocco needs to face its obligations to better understand and deal with the plight of recognized refugees living within its borders.